United Nations A/67/831–S/2013/217

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
10 April 2013

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session
Agenda item 105
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Letter dated 3 April 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the speech of the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, at the opening of the international conference on "Strengthening cooperation in preventing terrorism", held in Baku on 18 and 19 March 2013, and the Chair's summary of the conference (see annexes).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 105 of the agenda for its current session, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Agshin **Mehdiyev**
Ambassador
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Annex I

Speech by the President of Azerbaijan at the opening of the international conference on "Strengthening cooperation in preventing terrorism" (Baku, 18 March 2013)

First of all, I want to welcome all of you to Azerbaijan and express my gratitude for the opportunity to participate in such an important conference. I express my appreciation to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and to the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for promoting this important initiative and conducting this conference in Baku.

In my opinion, the fact that this conference against terrorism is being held in Azerbaijan is quite symbolic because Azerbaijan has suffered from international terrorism in the past, while now our country is making a major contribution to the prevention of terrorism on a global scale. Unfortunately, in the early 1990s our country became the target of terrorist attacks by Armenian terrorist organizations. Azerbaijani citizens were subjected to numerous terrorist attacks, which claimed the lives of 2,000 innocent people. About as many people were wounded. Azerbaijan has been exposed to aggression and the occupation of its lands. As you may know, in many cases these events have been accompanied by aggressive separatism. Acts of aggressive separatism and terrorist attacks against Azerbaijan have led to the occupation of almost 20 per cent of the internationally recognized territory of our country. Moreover, Azerbaijan has been exposed to the policy of ethnic cleansing, as more than 1 million Azerbaijanis have been driven out of their homes.

As you know, the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the biggest threats to regional stability and security. It is one of the greatest injustices in the world. The Security Council has adopted four resolutions demanding an unconditional and immediate withdrawal of Armenian troops from Azerbaijani territory. Unfortunately, these resolutions are not being implemented. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Parliament, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other international organizations have also adopted resolutions and decisions. Unfortunately, all these resolutions remain on paper. The internationally recognized territory of Azerbaijan has been under occupation for more than 20 years.

As I noted, this poses the biggest threat to international and regional stability and security. This issue must be resolved on the basis of international law; specifically, with reference to the Helsinki Final Act. The territorial integrity of Azerbaijan must be restored.

A settlement of the conflict must be based only on the norms and principles of international law. We are continuing our efforts towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict. Unfortunately, Armenia is trying to maintain the status quo as long as possible and to freeze the conflict to the maximum extent. However, this will not be possible because the world is changing and so is the regional balance. Azerbaijan is getting stronger in terms of political and economic development, and its role on the global scale is strengthening. Therefore, I am absolutely convinced that we will restore our territorial integrity. We want to achieve this as soon as possible. We strive to do this peacefully.

Our people have experienced one of the biggest tragedies of the twentieth century: the Khojaly genocide. On 26 February 1992, the Armenian armed forces attacked the residents of Khojaly. As a result of this villainous attack, 613 innocent civilians were killed, among them 100 women and 63 children. The parliaments of four countries have already officially recognized the Khojaly tragedy as an act of genocide. The process of recognizing the Khojaly events as an act of genocide is under way in other countries as well.

Azerbaijan is an active contributor to the fight against terrorism. We strongly believe that the international community should, above all, give a clear definition of international terrorism. Through political moves and practical activities Azerbaijan is trying to actively contribute to the global fight against terrorism. We firmly believe that thanks to a consolidation of efforts by the international community we can succeed in this fight.

There can be no justification for terrorism. We must not make distinctions between terrorist organizations on the basis of who is targeted by acts of terrorism. Therefore, I believe that a broad consolidation of efforts and full cooperation against terrorism will help us get the upper hand in this fight.

I believe that one of the topics that will be discussed at this conference will be how the international community can operate more efficiently in the fight against terrorism. Because we know from history, as well as from the present, that no country in the world, no matter how well it is protected, can effectively combat terrorism on its own and be completely insured against terrorist attacks.

The world is changing. Unfortunately, malicious people too take advantage of modern technologies. I believe that the mobilization of efforts could become one of the most effective tools in the fight against terrorism, including its prevention. Terrorism poses a threat to the international community, to the territorial integrity of countries, to economic and democratic development. I think that keeping this important issue on the global agenda will help us to build up our efforts in this fight, step by step. Azerbaijan is doing everything possible to ensure that the international community keeps the issue in the spotlight. For example, it is holding this conference in Baku. In addition, Azerbaijan dedicated its first presidency of the Security Council in May last year specifically to the subject of combating terrorism. For the first time, in May 2012 Azerbaijan presided over the Security Council. We declared open the ongoing discussion on the fight against terrorism. We chose this topic from among all the other issues on the agenda because we believed that focusing on this theme was more important.

If we do not effectively and selflessly struggle against terrorism, we cannot resolve any of the other issues we face. I remember the early years of our independence. At that time, the Armenians launched a series of terrorist attacks against our citizens in Baku and elsewhere. There was no stability. And where there is no stability, there can be no development. We know that from our own experience only too well. Political stability was established in Azerbaijan only in the mid-1990s. We began to develop, to attract investment, to modernize our economy and the political system and to establish a democratic system in Azerbaijan.

Unfortunately, terrorism has become part of daily life in countries affected by international terrorism. Under such circumstances, no one can talk about development. Under such circumstances, no investment is made and no reforms are

conducted. There is no democratic development because countries subjected to international terrorism have to fight back. And this has very dangerous implications. Therefore, preventing or reducing the threat of terrorism is the first major condition for development. This is why we chose this theme among all the other important topics on the international agenda and raised it at the Security Council. As a result of our initiative, a very important declaration was adopted. I believe that this declaration promotes and will continue to promote the mobilization of efforts. Without a consolidation of efforts, no country can succeed in the fight against terrorism.

I am very glad that representatives and experts from more than 50 countries and international organizations have come to Azerbaijan today. This is the international community. This is our response to such an important international issue. This is our contribution. I think that we must certainly approach this issue from different angles. We need to enhance our practical contribution to the fight against terrorism. Azerbaijan is making a strong contribution to the fight against terrorism at the international level and beyond. We must constantly keep this issue on the agenda and raise it at various international forums. At the same time, we have to use all available mechanisms to eliminate the conditions conducive to the emergence of terrorism. We need to narrow the scope of activities of terrorist organizations. We must work together to bridge the gaps that can create the conditions for people, in particular those with no education, to become involved in terrorist organizations.

This is where we come to another important issue. It is the issue of a peaceful coexistence of peoples. Unfortunately, while reading the international press, we see that sometimes attempts are made to link terrorism to Islam. There is some concern in the Muslim world over the growing Islamophobia. I think that the international community, in particular representatives of the media and non-governmental organizations, should act more responsibly and not hurt the feelings of hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world.

Terrorism has neither religion nor nationality. Regardless of the nationality and religion of individuals, all of humanity is suffering from terrorism. I think that this is one of the important issues that must always be in the spotlight. Without joining efforts, we cannot resolve this problem properly.

An important element in the global fight against terrorism is the promotion of ideas of multiculturalism. I think that given the current status of international relations, we must always pay attention to this issue. Azerbaijan is trying to ensure that multiculturalism is always on the agenda. We have conducted numerous international events, conferences and forums in Azerbaijan, where multiculturalism and related positive experiences have been discussed. We are aware of the different ideas being voiced in different societies and political circles these days. It is said that multiculturalism has failed or is moving towards a precipice. In my view, we should be very careful in making such assessments because there is no alternative to multiculturalism in this globalizing world. It is hard to imagine what alternative to multiculturalism there could be. For centuries, humankind has evolved, generations have replaced one another, but multiculturalism has mainly developed during the modern age. Therefore, we cannot back down from the results already achieved.

Azerbaijan is a country where representatives of different ethnicities and religions live in peace and friendship. This is an excellent example of how

multiculturalism is not moving towards a precipice. Multiculturalism is strengthening. It is especially important to recall that in the past we were part of other countries. And being part of these countries and empires, we communicated with people belonging to different nationalities and religions. In the Soviet Union, and even before that, a commitment to these ideas was seen as natural. But Azerbaijan has been an independent country for more than 20 years. I think that the ideas of multiculturalism and the essence of what is happening in Azerbaijan are good examples of our State policy in the years of independence and of the overall atmosphere in our society.

It is impossible to achieve such results through public policies alone. As far as we are concerned, we are very happy with the fact that the atmosphere in our society and Government policies serve the same purpose. The development of conditions conducive to peace and friendship between all nations and religions in Azerbaijan are among our goals. Our country is the home of all those who live here. This is our policy. It is a policy that will continue to be supported and that will grow further in the future. I am confident that the successes we have achieved in this area will have and are already having an impact on Azerbaijan and beyond.

One of the main issues in an effective fight against terrorism is education. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, terrorist organizations use uneducated people. They use young people who cannot read and write, they poison their brains, conduct propaganda and take young people down the wrong path.

Unfortunately, in some parts of the world, we see backwardness instead of development in terms of education and social issues. Sometimes, social injustice is an impetus to terrorism and the emergence of terrorist organizations. International terrorist organizations use all the shortcomings in society and try to attract as many people as possible in order to poison their brains. Therefore, education is key in the fight against terrorism. Azerbaijan attaches great importance and attention to education. The level of literacy in our country is 100 per cent. Our young people are educated and knowledgeable. We are open to the world. We have freedom of the media and all the other freedoms. We have a free Internet. Not all the countries of the world can be proud of having uncensored access to the Internet. Today, over 70 per cent of the population of Azerbaijan uses the Internet.

We invest heavily in information and communications technologies. At present, we have embarked on the implementation of a State programme to take broadband Internet to every city. This programme will be implemented over several years. In February, Azerbaijan launched into orbit its first telecommunications satellite and joined the group of countries with a space industry. Education, modern technologies and communication among young people from different countries can play an important role in that.

Of course, there is also the issue of poverty reduction. This factor is important in the fight against terrorism, in particular in poor countries. Referring again to our experience, I can say that we have made great strides in reducing poverty. In general, the economic development of Azerbaijan over the past 10 years looks very impressive. In the last 10 years our economy has been one of the fastest growing in the world. The gross domestic product (GDP) has grown threefold, while poverty has dropped from 50 per cent 10 years ago to 6 per cent according to the statistical indicators for 2012.

More than 1,100,000 jobs have been created in Azerbaijan, where the overall economic situation is quite stable. During the years of the global economic recession, our economy continued to grow. At present, the structure of the country's GDP is worthy of approval: the share of GDP that comes from the non-energy sector is growing rapidly — last year it was 10 per cent — and our foreign debt amounts to only 7 per cent of GDP.

International rating agencies — the three main ones being Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's — have downgraded the ratings of some developed countries, while the credit rating of Azerbaijan has been upgraded. The reduction of poverty and unemployment has been a major contributor to the overall development of Azerbaijan over the last 10 years. I am confident that in the coming years we will succeed in completely eliminating poverty.

I think that in order to properly address these issues in every society and in every country, as I said earlier, we should not forget the principle of social justice. Social justice and the rule of law mean tranquillity for every society. All these are important elements for eliminating the original conditions conducive to an atmosphere of terror. In recent years, we have certainly made an effort to strengthen our independence and to reinforce our law enforcement agencies. Within Azerbaijan, we have practically eliminated all potential terrorist threats. Therefore, we are now investing more in strengthening the border infrastructure.

As I have already said, no country is fully immune from the threat of terrorism. This is especially true for countries that are not located on islands, that are surrounded by neighbours and are located in regions where peace has not been entirely secured. Therefore, investments in the border infrastructure and effective border control are our top priority issues in the fight against terrorism in the region. There are no domestic sources of terrorism in our country that can cause concern.

I am sure that there will be extensive discussions today, that opinions will be expressed on how we can organize ourselves so that we can fight more efficiently and make this world a safer place, and that an exchange of experiences will be conducted.

Once again I welcome all the guests. I do hope that you will spend your time in Azerbaijan fruitfully. I wish the conference every success. Thank you very much.

Annex II

Chair's summary of the international conference on "Strengthening cooperation in preventing terrorism, held in Baku on 18 and 19 March 2013

The international conference on "Strengthening cooperation in preventing terrorism" was held in Baku on 18 and 19 March 2013 under the patronage of the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev. The conference, which was jointly organized by the Government of Azerbaijan, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, was chaired by Azerbaijan.

In his opening speech, President Aliyev stressed that terrorism poses a great threat to international peace and security, to the political independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and socioeconomic development of all States and to the promotion of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy. He spoke of contributions made by Azerbaijan to international cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism, mentioned the high-level meeting of the Security Council on threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, held on 4 May 2012 during Azerbaijan's presidency of the Council, and called for closer international cooperation. He emphasized the importance of education, promoting multiculturalism and mutual understanding, economic development and poverty reduction in eradicating terrorism.

A high-level session was organized in which ministers, heads of international organizations and senior personalities participated.

The conference focused on the following themes: cooperation in developing and undertaking measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; dialogue, understanding and countering stereotypes and the appeal of terrorism; and the role of international partners in building State capacity to prevent and combat terrorism.

The participants in the conference reaffirmed all the resolutions of the United Nations on combating terrorism and reiterated their strong and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes. The participants underlined the importance of the full and timely implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions and of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

It was the prevailing view among the participants that all acts of terrorism should be condemned as heinous crimes and that those who commit them must be prosecuted. In this context, they condemned the glorification of perpetrators of terrorist acts.

Given the nexus between terrorism and other threats to international peace and stability, the participants underlined that preventing terrorism requires close international cooperation and sustained efforts towards an effective, coordinated, balanced and systematic approach by the international community. The participants were unanimous in affirming that the scourge of terrorism can only be defeated by a comprehensive approach involving States, international and regional organizations and civil society.

The participants reiterated the obligation of States to refrain from providing any form of support to entities or persons involved in or associated with terrorist acts.

Armed conflicts, poverty, social exclusion, lack of education, human rights violations and attacks on religious and cultural values were mentioned as factors that could be conducive to the spread of terrorism.

In particular, it was emphasized that conflicts between States, foreign military aggression and aggressive separatism create conditions favourable for terrorism. In this respect, the participants maintained that areas of armed conflicts, particularly territories under foreign occupation that remain outside the legal constitutional order, provide a safe haven for international terrorism. The participants also expressed deep concern about the illegal economic activities taking place in these territories, which can be used for financing terrorist activities. In this regard, the participants maintained that crisis and conflict situations must be addressed decisively on the basis of norms and principles of international law, most notably of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States restoring constitutional order in conflict-affected territories.

The participants underlined the importance of addressing economic and social development and education with a view to encouraging deradicalization and diminishing the possibilities of individuals being recruited for terrorist activities.

The participants also underlined that any measure taken to combat terrorism must comply with the norms and principles of international law, including those related to human rights and international humanitarian law. They underscored, in this regard, that effective counter-terrorism measures and respect for the norms and principles of international law, including those related to human rights, fundamental freedoms and rule of law are mutually reinforcing.

The participants underscored that fighting terrorism cannot be used to justify attacks on a particular religion or culture. They expressed concern at increasing cases of blasphemy, in particular in connection with Islamophobia, and maintained the importance of engaging in joint efforts and dialogue to prevent such defamatory and erroneous concepts.

Participants reaffirmed that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, ethnicity or civilization. In this regard, the need for raising religious awareness among the public with a view to preventing conflicts on ethnic, religious and cultural grounds was emphasized.

Participants stressed the importance of having respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world and emphasized that continuing international efforts were needed to promote multiculturalism and broaden understanding among civilizations so as to contribute to strengthening the international fight against terrorism. In this respect, they expressed their appreciation for the positive role of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and other similar initiatives.

While acknowledging the importance of modern information and communications technologies, including the Internet, to promote dialogue and understanding among people, the participants expressed concern about the increase in cases of misuse of such technologies, in particular the Internet, for malign

purposes, such as recruitment and incitement, as well as for the financing, planning and preparation of terrorist activities, and stressed the importance of closer international cooperation in this regard.

The participants maintained that the absence of a clear definition of terrorism in international law does not help international efforts to combat terrorism, and underscored the importance of reaching agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

The participants extended their sincere gratitude to President Aliyev for his patronage of the conference, for the generous hospitality and kind reception and for the facilities provided by the Government of Azerbaijan. They also extended their gratitude and appreciation to the co-organizers of the conference and stressed the importance of following up on the conference with continued political consultations and practical actions.